

WEEK OF APRIL 1, 2002: MDOT FLASH FACTS

TOPIC: Sleepy/Tired Driving

Driving while you're sleepy is dangerous

- Sleepiness slows reaction time and impairs judgment, just like drugs or alcohol
- Some states say half their fatal crashes are caused by drowsy drivers
- Driving drowsy can be as dangerous as driving drunk.
- More than 70-thousand people are hurt in fall-asleep crashes every year.
- Drivers tend to fall asleep more often on long trips on high-speed, rural highways
- People driving alone, fatigued, on long trips on rural highways are most at risk.... so are people driving through the night or other times when they're normally asleep.
- Young people who are already sleep-deprived are likely crash victims.
- The drive home after work can be especially dangerous for night shift workers.
- Studies suggest truck-driver fatigue may contribute to 30-40 percent of all heavy truck crashes.
- Chronic insomnia, narcolepsy, sleep apnea or other sleep disorders increases crash risks.
- Sleep apnea hits 4% of middle-aged men and 2% of middle-aged women, but increases crash risks three to seven times.
- At least 700 crashes occur in Maine each year where the driver is asleep or fatigued.
- Falling asleep at the wheel often leads to Head-On or Run-Off-the-Road crashes-two of the most serious crash types.

To prevent drowsy driving:

- get a good night's sleep
- get companions to ride along on long trips
- have passengers stay awake to talk to drivers, keeping them awake
- schedule stops or breaks every 100 miles or 2 hours
- avoid alcohol or medications that may impair performance

Warning signs that you're driving drowsy:

- Can't remember the last few miles
- Drift between lanes or hit a roadside rumble strip
- Yawn repeatedly
- Can't keep your eyes open
- Nodding head

What to do about it:

- find a safe place to stop for a break
- don't count on the car radio, an open window, or other "tricks" to keep you awake
- take a brief nap in a safe place

Remember, a drowsy driver won't know they've fallen asleep until it's too late!!

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